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LETTER DATED 13 JUNE 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 6 June 1997 from Mr. Riyadh al-Qaysi, Under-Secretary in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, addressed to the Deputy Executive Chairman of the Special Commission.

I request you to have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: English]

Letter dated 6 June 1997 from the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Deputy Executive Chairman of the Special Commission Established by the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 9 (b) (i) of Security Council resolution 687 (1991)

I write in reference to your letter dated 5 June 1997 to the Deputy Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Tariq Aziz, and should like to point out the following.

1. As was pointed out in the two letters addressed to the Executive Chairman of the Commission yesterday by Mr. Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister, we believe that the incident referred to in your letter and that referred to in the Executive Chairman's letter of 4 June have been instigated at this time in particular, when the Executive Chairman will shortly relinquish his post, with the deliberate intention of creating a false and unjustified crisis. Our belief is not without foundation when seen against the background of the exaggeration of facts in order to create dramatized situations of the type we have witnessed recently in the letters sent by the Special Commission. Certainly, it is not in the interest of Iraq to create any such situation.

2. The Iraqi pilot referred to in your letter is a lieutenant-colonel of the highest technical standards and expertise. He has participated in the Commission's flights for nearly two years, with a total of about 2,000 flying hours, without any problem whatsoever. It would be naive, therefore, to describe the pilot as if he had no regard for the safety of the lives of the Commission's personnel on board, while he himself and the Iraqi minder were also on board and naturally would be exposed to the same danger. This indicates the inclination of the Commission to dramatize situations in order to create a negative atmosphere against Iraq in the Security Council.

3. In point of fact, the Chief Inspector of the Aerial Inspection Team, Mr. David Rendel, insisted that the Commission's pilot use a flight path over a presidential site, which we cannot accept for security reasons. You will recall that this insistence on the part of the Chief Inspector is unjustified in view of the Joint Statement signed on 22 June 1996, namely, that "being guided by the commitment of Member States of the United Nations to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Iraq, the Special Commission undertook that, in carrying out its mandate and exercising its rights under the relevant Security Council resolutions, it would operate with full respect for the legitimate security concerns of Iraq" (emphasis added).

4. The target the Chief Inspector on board was interested in surveilling seems to have been the biology departments of the Colleges of Medicine and Education, both of which are situated within the residential area of the city of Tikrit, as there is no other site related to the work of the Commission within that area.

It would have been quite possible and easy to reach the target with a flight detour of two minutes had the Chief Inspector agreed. The Iraqi pilot, in fact, reasoned with the Chief Inspector, to the extent of begging him to reconsider his position and not create any problem and that he should accept the flight detour, but the Chief Inspector did not change his position.

(Signed) Riyadh AL-QAYSI
Under-Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs